(c) the names of Airports of the North-East where Central Tourists' Information Centres are to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (KUMARI UMA BHARTI): (a) Projects/schemes are prioritised for development of tourism in the North-Eastern Regions in consultation with State Govts. The Ministry of Tourism has taken following measures:—

(1) In the current year, 149 projects/schemes have been identified for an amount of Rs. 3650.09 Lakhs for development of tourism in this region.

(2) 10% of the Plan Budget of the Ministry of Tourism is earmarked for development of Tourism in the North-Eastern Region.

(3) A chapter of Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management has recently been opened at Guwahati.

(4) A full fledged Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology at Shillong has been sanctioned.

(5) North-Eastern States are given a free booth in World largest tourism fair ITB-Berlin.

(b) Tourism being a multi-sectoral activity, it is not possible to quantify income derived therefrom for each state. During the year 1998-99, the estimated foreign exchange earnings from tourism were to the tune of Rs. 12011.46 crores for the country;

(c) There is no proposal to open new Central Tourists' Information Centres at the Airports in North-East by the Ministry of Tourism.

Performance of Tourist Offices Abroad

768. SHRI K. M. SAIFULLAH: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that only 17 people from Buenos Aires visited India last year despite huge tourist office complex in Argentina last year;

(b) whether the money spent on tourist offices abroad commensurate with foreign exchange earnings from tourists; and

(c) if not, the measures proposed to close such tourist offices from abroad which could not promote tourism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (KUMARI UMA BHARTI): (a) No, Sir. It is not correct that only 17 people from Buenos Aires visited India last year. During 1998, 3776 tourists arrived from Argentina.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Development of Kargil as a Tourist Centre

769. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether with the winding up of Kargil conflict, Government propose to convert Kargil into a tourist centre or a place of pilgrimage for the nation; and

(b) if so, the details of the plan and the steps taken in that direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (KUMARI UMA BHARTI): (a) and (b) The primary role for development of tourism in places of tourist importance is that of the State Governments. However, Ministry of Tourism strengthens their efforts by providing financial assistance for projects/schemes in consultation with them. Accordingly, for the year 1999-2000, 28 projects/schemes for an amount of Rs. 909.59 lakhs have been decided to be sanctioned for the State of Jammu & Kashmir. No project proposal for Kargil has been received from the State Government.

Development of Tourist Spots in Assam

770. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the places which have been developed as tourist spots in Assam during the last three years;

(b) whether Government is taking any action to develop tourist spots at Kaspur and Bubhan hill in southern parts of Assam or Barak Valley; and